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TRIBUTE

TO

THE MEMORY OF THE LATE

CASPAR WISTAR, M. D.

President of Widener, &c. in the University of Pennsylvania, President of the American Philanthropic Society for the Promotion of Social Knowledge, &c.

BY HIS FRIEND,

DAVID HOSACK, M. D.

Professor, &c. in the University of the City of New-York.

RECEIVED IN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE SUPREME COURT, JAN. 20, 1818.

NEW-YORK,

Printed by D. S. Yaw Wicks, Printer to the University,

No. 141 Nassau-Street.

... 1818.

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TO

THE MEMORY OF THE LATE

CASPAR WISTAR, M. D.

Professor of Anatomy, &c. in the University of Pennsylvania, President of the American Philosophical Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge, &c.

BY HIS FRIEND,

DAVID HOSACK, M. D.

Professor, &c. in the University of the State of New-York.

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DELIVERED IN THE HALL OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, JAN. 26, 1818.

NEW-YORK;

Printed by C. S. Van Winkle, Printer to the University,

No. 101 Greenwich-street.

1818.

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At a meeting of the Students of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the University of the State of New-York, held in the College-Hall, Saturday, 24th January, 1818, Mr. OWEN, of Tennessee, Chairman, Mr. SHELDON, Secretary :

RESOLVED, That we have received with the deepest regret, the intelligence of the death of that distinguished ornament of our profession, Dr. WISTAR, Professor of Anatomy in the University of Pennsylvania.

RESOLVED, That Professor HOSACK be requested to deliver an eulogy on the occasion, and that Messrs. T. Fortier, J. Smith, and L. C. Beck, be appointed a committee to wait upon him for that purpose.

RESOLVED, That the usual badge of mourning be worn for 30 days.

R. OWEN, Chairman.

E. SHELDON, Secretary.



At a meeting of the Students of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the University of the State of New-York, held on Monday, January 26th, 1818, Mr. OWEN, Chairman, Mr. SHELDON, Secretary :

RESOLVED, That the thanks of this meeting be presented to Professor HOSACK for the eloquent address delivered by him, this day, upon the character, and public services of the late Dr. WISTAR, Professor of Anatomy in the University of Pennsylvania, and that he be respectfully solicited to furnish a copy thereof, for publication.

RESOLVED, That the standing committee wait on Professor Hosack, with a copy of this resolution.

TO MESSRS.

T. FORTIER, J. SMITH, AND L. C. BECK,

COMMITTEE

GENTLEMEN,

I comply with the request which your kindness has dictated, trusting, that the short period of time that has been allotted me for the performance of this duty, will furnish an apology for the errors and defects that will, under existing circumstances, be inseparable from an exercise of this nature.

I am, gentlemen,
with sentiments of regard,
your obedient servant,

DAVID HOSACK.

New-York, January 26, 1818.

TRIBUTE, &c.



Gentlemen, Students of Medicine,

BEFORE I enter upon this day's discourse, allow me, in compliance with your request, and in the indulgence of those feelings, which a long and uninterrupted friendship has produced, to call your attention for a few moments to the painful subject that suspended our exercises on the day of our last meeting.* By the death of the celebrated professor, whose loss we lament, not only the city of Philadelphia, the scene

* Professor Wistar died in Philadelphia on the morning of the 22d of January, 1818; the afflicting intelligence of his decease reached New-York on Saturday morning, the 24th.

of his labours and usefulness, not only the university of Pennsylvania, of which he was a distinguished member, have reason to mourn; but his loss is one of a national character, in which we all participate, and which will be lamented in every part of our land, to which the benefits of medical education have been extended: for there are comparatively few of the physicians of our country, at this time in the practice of their profession, who have not been indebted to him for their instruction in that department of medical education, in which he so eminently excelled.

Although we are not permitted to join in the solemn assembly, that will this day be convened to attend his remains to the tomb, let us unite with his numerous friends in the indulgence of those painful feelings which his premature and unexpected death has occasioned, and call to our remembrance some of the most important events of his life, some of the great features of his character, that have given value to his name, and reflected honour upon our country. Such, and so numerous were his virtues, so extensive were his litera-

ry and professional attainments, and so distinguished was his career of usefulness, that we are naturally led to trace the progress of that mind, that has been capable of effecting so much for the benefit of his fellow men.

Dr. Caspar Wistar was a native of that city, which he adorned by his learning, and enriched by his labours : he was born in the year 1760 : his parents were of German extraction, and belonged to the society of friends, of which they were highly respected members.

Dr. Wistar received his elementary education at the celebrated grammar school that had been originally established in the city of Philadelphia, by William Penn. At that seminary he received an excellent English and classical education, the institution being at that time under the direction of Mr. John Thompson, an eminent scholar, and very able teacher of the Latin and Greek languages, and now a respectable merchant in the city of Philadelphia. With the preparatory knowledge thus acquired, young Wistar re-

solved to study medicine as the business of his future life: for this purpose he entered as a private pupil of the late Dr. John Redman, then one of the most eminent practitioners of physic in the city of Philadelphia. While he was thus acquiring the advantages of much practical information in the office of his preceptor, he also diligently availed himself of every opportunity of instruction that his native city then afforded, by attendance upon the medical lectures of Drs. Morgan, Shippen, Rush, and Kuhn.

Stimulated by the success and distinction which those eminent teachers and practitioners of medicine had derived from a visit to Europe, and an attendance upon the celebrated schools of Leyden, Edinburgh, and London; always animated by the desire of excelling in whatever he undertook, and of rendering himself most useful in his profession, he proceeded to Europe for the purpose of improving his acquisitions in medicine, and of extending his researches in those branches of science which are most nearly connected with it, and in which he afterwards excelled.

In the spring of 1784, shortly after his departure for Europe, the trustees of the medical school of Philadelphia, as an evidence of his attainments in his professional studies, conferred upon him the degree of Bachelor of Medicine.

At the university of Edinburgh he was distinguished for the same assiduity, correct moral deportment, and retiring modest demeanour, that characterized him in every period of his life, and which, young gentlemen, permit me to add, you will ever find to be the sure and never failing passports to distinction and usefulness.

Such, too, was the impression made at that early period of his life, upon his friends in the university of Edinburgh, that his name was ever afterwards mentioned in terms of the warmest regard and respect. The impression which was thus made upon my mind, by the affectionate language in which he was spoken of by the late celebrated divine, Dr. Erskine, the present eminent physician of that city, Dr. Charles Stuart, and by the elder Professor Duncan,

in all of whose families he had been domesticated, can never be erased.

In 1786 he was graduated a doctor of medicine at the university of Edinburgh: upon that occasion he published and defended a Thesis, "*de animo demisso*," to which subject his attention was probably directed by the feelings that constantly found a residence in his own sensitive bosom.

In February, 1787, after an absence of nearly four years, Dr. Wistar returned to Philadelphia, instructed in every branch of medicine, and the physical sciences with which it is most intimately associated: he was accordingly prepared to fill any station, in which his services might be called for, either as a practitioner, or as a teacher of medicine.

The first testimony borne to his merits by his fellow citizens upon his return to his native country was, his appointment as a physician to the Philadelphia Dispensary, which had been established in the preceding year.

About that period, the medical school attached to the *University of Pennsylvania*, and an association denominated the *College of Philadelphia*, were rival institutions.

The physicians of that metropolis became early acquainted with the professional merit and erudition of their new associate; he was accordingly invited to the professorship of Chemistry and Physiology, in the "*College of Philadelphia*." This station he accepted, and immediately entered upon the duties assigned him.

As a teacher, he at once evinced those great qualifications, by which he was afterwards distinguished. The same fluency of utterance, the unaffected ease and simplicity of manner, the perspicuity of expression, the animation and earnestness arising from the conviction of the truths he was delivering, as well as the desire of impressing them upon the minds of his pupils, and the readiness with which he summoned and applied the numerous and varied resources of his mind, which many of you, now in my hearing, have

had an opportunity of witnessing, Dr. Wistar displayed in a most remarkable manner, in the first lessons he delivered in the then college of Philadelphia.

Although his labours greatly contributed to the reputation of the school with which he was connected, as soon as a favourable moment for conciliation presented itself, with his characteristic amiable and benevolent temper, he evinced the most ardent desire to see the conflict terminated, and the two schools united. Let me add, that chiefly by his instrumentality and disinterested exertions, that very important object was accomplished.

Upon the consolidation of the two rival schools, Dr. Wistar was associated with the late celebrated Dr. William Shippen, as an adjunct professor of anatomy and surgery in the University of Pennsylvania.

I need not say how much his exertions, united with those of his colleagues, have contributed to elevate that medical school to its present high distinction.

The benefits derived from the labours of Doctor Wistar are too well known and appreciated to require notice on this occasion. His transcendant merits as a teacher have left an impression upon those who have had the pleasure of hearing his lectures, that can never be forgotten. Such were his fascinating powers of description, that even upon those subjects that are usually considered as an uninviting part of a course of anatomical lectures, the attention of his hearers was ever awakened, and unremitting; even in the demonstration of a *muscle* or a *bone*, his views were those of the philosopher as well as of the anatomist.

But the university of Pennsylvania was not the only scene of his usefulness. Shortly after his return to his native city, he became extensively engaged in the practice of physic and surgery. In the latter branch he was initiated under the immediate friendship and patronage of the late Dr. John Jones, then the most distinguished surgeon of the city of Philadelphia, as he had been of the American army during the revolutionary war.

Dr. Jones, knowing the modest merit of young Wistar; knowing too that he had been well instructed in the principles of surgery, as well as the other branches of medicine, took an early opportunity of introducing him to the citizens of Philadelphia as an operating surgeon.

Dr. Jones having occasion to perform an important operation, invited Dr. Wistar to accompany him; when the patient was prepared, Dr. Jones, addressing Dr. Wistar, as having better sight than himself, at the same time presenting him his knife, requested it as a favour that he would perform the operation. Dr. Wistar immediately complied, and such was the skill and success with which it was performed, that it at once introduced him to the confidence of his fellow-citizens. The delicate manner in which this unexpected compliment was paid to the talents of Dr. Wistar, was not lost upon his feeling and grateful heart; he ever after acknowledged the patronage of his benefactor by every act of kindness in his power, and by the unceasing expressions of filial affection.

Dr. Wistar was also very early elected one of the surgeons of the Pennsylvania hospital, where he enjoyed the opportunity of illustrating, at the bed side, the principles of practice which he taught from the desk of the university: and permit me here to remark, that his views were not confined to the mechanical or operative part of his profession; but, following the example of a Kirkland, a Pott, a Cruikshank, a Hunter, and an Abernethy, his survey of the disease ever embraced a regard for those *general principles*, upon which alone that art can be successfully practised.

Dr. Wistar was too much engaged in the practical duties of his profession to enjoy leisure sufficient for extensive literary undertakings. The writings, however, which he has left, are of a nature and character which cause us to regret they are not more numerous. During the prevalence of the yellow fever in Philadelphia, in 1793, and in subsequent years, he was an active partaker in the scenes of calamity that desolated that city; and in the Transactions of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, you will find several interesting notices by him, on the peculiar

character of that fatal epidemic. The *System of Anatomy*, which he originally designed and published as a text-book for his class, is familiarly known to you all. In every page of that work, whether we view him as an anatomist, or as the enlightened and profound physiologist, the author shows how competent he was for the important office he assumed. He also enriched the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society with several interesting memoirs, and in the volume of this learned association now in the press, and about to appear, he has drawn up with great fidelity, a circumstantial account of the life and labours of his late colleague, Dr. William Shippen.

As a literary character, few men held a more elevated rank, in the estimation of all to whom he was known, than Dr. Wistar. Beside those branches of science more immediately connected with the medical profession, as far as his duties as a practitioner permitted, he cultivated, with great industry and success, almost every department of literature. His house was the weekly resort of the literati of the city of Philadelphia, and at his hospitable board the learn-

ed stranger from every part of the world, of every tongue and nation, received a cordial welcome. His urbanity, his pleasing and instructive conversation, his peculiar talent in discerning and displaying the characteristic merits or acquirements of those with whom he conversed, will be remembered with pleasure by all who have ever enjoyed his society and conversation.

In 1815 he was elected an Honorary member of the Literary and Philosophical Society of New-York; and, as an evidence of the high estimation in which he was held, both for his learning and his private worth, I may add, that when the presidency of the American Philosophical Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge, was vacated in 1816, Dr. Wistar, by an unanimous suffrage, was elected to fill that honourable station: honourable, having been previously occupied only by his illustrious predecessors, a Franklin, a Rittenhouse, and a Jefferson.

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